



Sign-in



Sign-in



Sign-in



LOT #47032 | < Jump to Lot GO >

SOLD FOR: [SIGN-IN](#) OR [JOIN \(FREE & QUICK\)](#)

"Rose Percy" Doll with Extensive Wardrobe and Accessories, Sold in 1864 to Raise Funds for the Sanitary Commission, and on Dis... (Total: 23 Items)

Click the image to load the highest resolution version.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

[View More >](#)

Sold for:

[Sign-in](#) or [Join \(free & quick\)](#)

Claim Item:

[Sign-in](#) or [Join \(free & quick\)](#)

Share this lot

[Sell One of These](#)

[Currency Converter](#)

 [Description](#)

 [Auction Info](#)

 [Guides & Info](#)

## Description

**The Most Historic of all Civil War Benefit Dolls. A Favorite of Little Girls (of all ages) for Many Decades.**

**"Rose Percy" Doll with Extensive Wardrobe and Accessories, Sold in 1864 to Raise Funds for the Sanitary Commission, and on Display at the American Red Cross Museum since 1920.** A 23" English poured wax doll with blue eyes and blond hair, maker unknown (possibly Charles Marsh or Herbert John Meech). Initially sold at the April 1864 Metropolitan Fair in New York to raise funds for the work of the Sanitary Commission, Rose Percy is being offered with an original wardrobe of clothing and collection of accessories that are second to none in scope, quality, or history. Rose was loaned for display to the American Red Cross in 1920 by her original owner, Mrs. Horace H. Chittenden (née Bertha Peters). Later, in 1954, the son and daughter-in-law of Mrs. Chittenden (whose father-in-law was Register of the U.S. Treasury under Abraham Lincoln) gifted Rose to that organization.

Rose Percy's history begins in 1862. She was most likely imported directly from London by the New York merchant whose window display caught the eyes of the young ladies of Mrs. Ogden Hoffman's boarding

school. Rose is eternally in her late-pre or early teens, about the same age as the girls who took it as a labor of love to give her an extensive and beautiful hand sewn wardrobe, a project that took almost a year and a half. While some worked on the sewing and embroidery, others persuaded local merchants to donate not only the raw materials for the dainty and fashionable clothing, but also accessories befitting the most sophisticated of young ladies. New York dry goods merchant Arnold Constable donated much of the yard goods. The girls appealed to leading furrier Gunther's Sons for Rose's darling ermine fur accessories. Another local merchant, Tiffany & Co., created elegant jewelry, personalized "Miss Rose Percy" stationery, and other delicate items. The girls of the Hoffman boarding school donated Rose and her wardrobe to the Metropolitan Fair in aid of the Sanitary Commission in April 1864. The Sanitary Commission was the forerunner of today's American Red Cross and funds were needed to continue their ministry to the sick and wounded of the war. Among the treasures of the world on display for perusal or purchase at this massive bazaar sat Rose Percy on her own small sofa (not now present), along with her wardrobe and her favorite books, photo albums, and dressing accessories.

Rose Percy was first purchased by one of the female members of the wealthy New York Astor family who paid for her and then donated her back to the Sanitary Commission to raise additional money for their coffers. Tradition says that she was raffled off for \$1200 to an unknown gentleman. We feel, based on the agreement of the fair planning committee to not hold raffles at the New York event, that she was more likely auctioned off for this sum, an amazing amount of money in 1864 to pay for a doll. (For comparison, please note that Abraham Lincoln's donated original handwritten draft of the Emancipation Proclamation sold for \$3000 at a similar fair in Chicago.) This second owner donated the doll and clothing back to Mrs. Hoffman's boarding school. They, in turn, gave Rose Percy to a Doctor Peters where she became the "foster child" of his own daughter Bertha.

Many times during the next years and decades would Bertha allow her precious Rose Percy to travel to fairs and exhibitions, creating interest and raising money for various worthy causes. Her lovely face, her noble history, and her magnificent clothing never ceased to please and fascinate those who viewed her, those of all ages and both sexes. No one can count how much money she helped raise throughout the years. The eventual home for Rose became the American Red Cross Museum where Bertha Parker Chittenden, just before her death, placed her on permanent display in 1920 (an event covered widely in the press of the day) and where she would repose for most of the next eighty-five years. No organization better represents in today's world the undertaking of the Sanitary Commission during that tragic war long ago.

The condition of the doll itself is generally good. She has had two "facelifts," one in the 1930s and one in 1966. Her nose and right leg have a bit of heat damage and her right arm is loose. A foot has been replaced and her body stuffing has almost certainly been rearranged. Her wardrobe and accessories are generally in fine or better condition.

All in all, this is an extremely important grouping with an unbroken thread of provenance dating back to the Civil War, worthy of display in the finest institutional or private collections. Heritage wants to help the American Red Cross find Rose Percy a suitable new home where she can thrill and amaze many more generations to come. "If dolls had memories, hers would be of a proud past, filled with important days and happy associations." (*Red Cross Bulletin*, June 21, 1920). *From the collection of the American Red Cross.*

**The Rose Percy Wardrobe and Accessories.** All items are carefully wrapped and placed in archival quality boxes. A brief inventory is listed below, grouped by the contents of each box.

**(1)** Three hats: velvet with veil, flowers, and tie; velvet with bow and tie; and blue and white silk.

**(2)** Accessories including: six miniature books- *Downy and Her Kittens*, *Dick Lee*, *The Lost Baby*, *Willie's Vacation Vol. 1*, *Willie's Vacation Vol.2*, *The Little Chimney Sweeper* (all Boston: S. R. Urbino, 1864) (all with "Rose Percy" written in script on the front free endpaper); a Tiffany & Co. gold necklace with nine coral pendant drops in its original, custom-fitted, "RP" monogrammed plum leather lined in Tiffany blue velvet; a grooming kit in a lined wooden box; small leather case with "Miss Rose Percy" calling cards and original engraving plate (possibly by Tiffany); a set of dominoes in a wooden, slide-top box; a "Fairy Album" by J. E. Tilton of Boston, with inserted photos and Bertha Peters name written in the front; Tiffany & Co. matching buttons and a brooch in a fitted leather case with blue velvet lining; a sewing kit in a basket with thimble, pin cushion, etc.; and a box of monogrammed notepaper and envelopes in the original Tiffany & Co. box.

- (3) Yellow taffeta dress and red ice-skating dress.
- (4) Blue and white robe, flannel slip, and crocheted sweater.
- (5) White silk dress with tartan ribbon trim and pink silk dress.
- (6) Purple silk dress with black lace ribbon.
- (7) Ermine fur coat, muffs, and collars, quilted bag, and wash bag with hairpins.
- (8) Green coat with quilted lining, green dress, blue and white plaid dress, blue wool coat, and green cape with hood.
- (9) White dickey, two white sleeves, and a white slip.
- (10) Straw boater with flowers and a straw bonnet with fringe and tie.
- (11) White short gown, white dickey, three white hankies, red and white hankie, two sleeves, and pair white pantaloons.
- (12) Another group of accessories including: a blanket roll; a hairnet; a Tiffany fitted case for two bracelets (missing); a jump rope, a small photo album; pair of ice skates with bag; a hand fan; powder container with puff; views of Paris album; a wallet; clothes brush and matching hairbrush; purse with chain strap; and a purse with **four original circulated coins from the period**- three half dimes (1854 with arrows at date, 1857, and 1861) and one three cent silver (appears to be 1852).
- (13) Black lace boots, brown half-boots, white button shoes, black button shoes, white leather gloves, knit bedroom slippers, white and blue leggings, blue and black leggings, red stockings, two pair white socks and one single, and one pair short white socks.
- (14) Two white slips.
- (15) White lawn dress, white dickey, and two slips.
- (16) Pair lawn sleeves, fitted blouse, and loose blouse.
- (17) Purple dress with black trim and green silk taffeta check dress.
- (18) Dark green dress in silk taffeta with black trim.
- (19) Green and white skirt with jacket, plaid dress, red dress with black trim and white sleeves.
- (20) Blue wool dress with black trim and white sleeves.
- (21) Blouse, two pair of pantaloons, five short gowns, five long gowns, and hoop half slip.
- (22) White gauze dress.

A big thank you goes out to *Antique Doll Collector* magazine for providing us with an excellent article, "Remarkable Rose," that appeared in their May 2005 issue and to the author, Elizabeth Ann Coleman, for her painstaking research. Also, thanks to Virginia Mescher for her article "'Small but Mighty Host' Benefit and Fund Raising Dolls in the Civil War" and for providing us copies of Red Cross publications from 1920 and 1931. Copies of a number of newspaper and other articles used in our research are included with the lot. *This lot requires 3rd party shipping.*

### More Information:

**The United States Sanitary Commission**, a civilian organization that is considered the forerunner of the American Red Cross, had a brief but very important role in bringing medical aid and general support to our fighting men during and just after the Civil War, a conflict with conditions so rough that many more men died of disease than were killed in battle. On April 22, 1861, just days after the Battle of Fort Sumter, the editor of the New York Times, Henry Raymond, published an editorial titled "Work for the Ladies." He suggested that interested "ladies in the several Wards, or in connection with the different Churches of the City, form small organizations among themselves for the purpose of preparing bandages, lint and other articles of indispensable necessity for the wounded" and proposed a meeting of those so disposed to meet with his wife and their residence that very day. At that same time, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the nation's first female medical doctor, started training women at Bellevue for work as army nurses. On April 26, she helped organize a meeting of 4000 women at Cooper Union to found the Women's Central Association of Relief for the Sick and Wounded of the Army. It was modeled after the British Sanitary Commission who, during the Crimean War, sought to lessen disease caused by the unsanitary conditions of war. Their efforts at interesting federal officials in the cause were unsuccessful so they turned to their male colleagues. On May 15, 1861, a Unitarian clergyman named Henry Bellows led a delegation of male doctors to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Lincoln on behalf of the women's group. Lincoln was reluctant at first, thinking that this organization would be a "fifth wheel to the coach"; on June 8, 1861, however, he approved the recommendation of the war department establishing the Sanitary Commission with Bellows as its president. By 1863, there were 7,000 local affiliates. Though its officers and agents were mostly men, nearly all its volunteers were women who tirelessly collected food, clothing, medicine, and supplies for the soldiers, alleviating an untold amount of suffering and death from disease. All this took money and the chief method for raising the necessary funds, from 1863-1865, was through "Sanitary Fairs" held across the country, starting with one in Chicago in late October 1863. These bazaars offered the paid admittes exhibits to view, donated goods to purchase, and entertainment and restaurant meals to enjoy. The Chicago

fair raised nearly \$100,000 against a \$25,000 goal. One of the ways to increase the "take" was to raffle or auction off quality items, often donated by the rich and/or famous. In Chicago, President Lincoln's original draft to the Emancipation Proclamation sold for \$3000 at Chicago. Every city wanted to jump on the Sanitary Fair bandwagon, especially New York City.

**The Metropolitan Fair in Aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission**, held April 4-27, 1864 in buildings erected on Fourteenth Street and Union Square, was the largest of the fairs. After months of preparation and planning, this grand fair opened on April 4 which New York City Mayor Godfrey Gunther proclaimed a General Holiday, "...during the continuance of the unhappy strife which our once peaceful States are involved, there has arisen a host of Good Samaritans, whose sole care is 'to allay the pain and draw out the irritation' of the unfortunate participants therein... The Sanitary Fairs throughout the country are to culminate in the gigantic enterprise of the benevolent ladies of this Metropolis... In view of the importance of the occasion, and the praiseworthy associations connected with this labor of love, I recommend to my fellow citizens the 4th day of April, inst., as a holiday..." Though the fair's planning committees were mostly made up of local businessmen, the hard work put forth by the women of the Sanitary Commission was beautifully noted in a speech by Joseph Hodges Choate at the opening ceremonies, in part: "It is the women of a country, in whose hands its destiny reposes; and no cause that is not great enough to command their devotion, and pure enough to deserve their sympathy, can ever wholly triumph... It is the cause of our country, bleeding from the living veins of her brave sons. Thousands and tens of thousands of our sick and wounded heroes now languish in the hospitals of the Sanitary Commission, from the Potomac to the Mississippi, and thousands and tens of thousands more will be added to their number in the months of battle that are already impending over us. It was to save and succor these martyrs to our liberties that that noble institution was founded, and to hold up the drooping hands of the institution itself the women of all the cities of the North, with a spontaneous and contagious impulse, have devoted the entire winter to the work of these fairs." Choate goes on to expound upon the glories of the fair, emphasizing the fundraising purpose: "... And now, if you will look around you at all the wonders of the Fair, you will see that the ladies have spared no pains to satisfy every taste, however fastidious, and to draw the money from every pocket, however reluctant... But you must go and look for yourselves for these and all the other glories of the Fair. You can hardly go amiss in any direction, in the honest endeavor to empty your burdensome purses-and be sure that no less than this is expected of you." People certainly took that plea for generosity to heart; when all the accounting was finished, \$1.18 million was added to the coffers of the Sanitary Commission. A portion of that money, of course, was raised through the sale of an English poured wax doll named Rose Percy along with her magnificent wardrobe and accessories.

**The English poured wax doll** was an art form perfected by the dollmakers of London starting in the 1850s, likely a craft that evolved from the manufacture of religious effigies from wax for the Church. These English dolls were made in the likeness of young children and were intended (and sturdy enough in manufacture) to be played with, to be dressed and undressed in realistic children's attire, unlike the French dolls in their aristocratic finery. It took many people to manufacture each one of these beautiful and realistic dolls with skilled specialists handling different stages of creation. The modelers sculpted a doll from wax or clay and then created a plaster mold. Then the melted wax would be poured into the mold to cast the head. Another person would cut out wax for the insertion of the eyes (often a German import). More melted wax was then poured into the skull that would cool to keep the eyes in place. Next, the human hair would be painstakingly inserted into the skull a few strands at a time so that the doll's hair could be brushed by its young owner without damage. Wigs were not good enough for these dolls. Eyelashes and eyebrows were often done the same way. The arms and legs were cast at the same time to assure a color match and the bodies were frequently made of calico and then stuffed. These wax dolls, unlike the composition or china dolls of the period, had a much more realistic look and feel with their almost-human facial expressions and human hair. It was just such a doll that the young ladies of Mrs. Ogden's boarding school in New York fell in love with and set out to outfit in such a magnificent fashion that money could be raised to aid the Sanitary Commission's cause. Beside the work that the girls did themselves, they appealed to local merchants to craft items exclusively for Rose Percy that would set her apart from all others. One of these local merchants, furrier C. G. Gunther's Sons, donated an ermine tippet, muff, cuffs, and cap. Interestingly, one of the Gunther sons was then mayor of New York. One of the other local merchants is a brand known and venerated worldwide today, Tiffany and Co.

**New York's legendary Tiffany and Co.** was founded in New York in 1837 by Charles Lewis Tiffany and Teddy Young as a "stationery and fancy goods emporium" and originally was known as Tiffany, Young and Ellis. The name was shortened in 1853 when Tiffany took control of the company and established their emphasis on fine jewelry. By this point in the Civil War, Tiffany was producing swords, flags, and surgical implements for the Union Army. Their contributions, in response to the request of Mrs. Ogden's girls, of personalized stationery and calling cards, jewelry, and other gorgeous and diminutive accessories makes Rose Percy even more unique and historical. It is incredibly rare to find Tiffany jewelry today still nestled in its original fitted Tiffany box.